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# Dialogue starts on film studio plan

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Steven Feinberg of the Rhode Island Film Commission, beside a map of Hopkinton where Pacifica Ventures hopes to build a film studio.

The Providence Journal / Steve Szydlowski

HOPKINTON — State and local officials announced yesterday a proposal for the construction of the state's first film studio, on 60 acres in Hopkinton off Route 95's Exit 2.

The venture, which would include a hotel and office space, would require a 20 percent state tax credit, said Hal Katersky, chairman of Pacifica Ventures, a development firm that deals primarily with the entertainment business.

State legislators plan to introduce legislation Tuesday that would create a new tax credit for motion picture studios — similar to the existing motion picture production tax credit, said House Speaker William J. Murphy at a news conference yesterday afternoon.

The proposal — which would grant Pacifica Ventures a nearly \$15-million tax break — is yet to be reviewed by the House and Senate finance committees.

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This would be Pacifica Ventures' third such venture in the United States. Last year the company opened its first studio, in Albuquerque, N.M. The company plans to break ground on

another in Philadelphia this summer.

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Katersky, a Tiverton native and University of Rhode Island graduate, said the Santa Monica, Calif.-based company also plans to ask for some form of tax increment financing.

Last week the Town Council adopted a tax stabilization policy that allows commercial and industrial developers to apply for a five-year phase-in of property tax payments. Under that arrangement, the developer would pay taxes on the land value in year one, with taxes on the buildings being paid at 25 percent increments in the following years.

For years Hopkinton has been attempting to promote development in the Route 95 area.

An ad hoc committee is working on a redevelopment proposal for Exit 1, a plan that would create four districts south of the Hopkinton City historic district near the Connecticut line.

Town officials had originally considered creating a public water system to serve businesses in the area. Those plans never materialized, Town Manager William A. DiLibero said.

Instead, the developer of Hopkinton Industrial Park, on whose land the system would be located, plans to establish and maintain the system, selling water to those businesses that opt to join it, DiLibero said.

DiLibero said the town learned of Pacifica Ventures' interest in the Exit 2 area on Tuesday, when House Speaker William J. Murphy and Senate President Joseph A. Montalbano called for a joint news conference "to announce a plan to bring a major film production studio to Rhode Island, generating jobs and economic benefits."

Discussions, however, had started nearly a year earlier.

Last spring, representatives of the company had set their eyes on a property off Route 5 in West Greenwich.

They approached state Sen. Kevin Breene, who is West Greenwich's town planner and town manager.

At the time, Breene said, the town was already in negotiations with another company — Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers, whose U.S. head offices are in Lincoln, Neb. So Breene suggested Hopkinton, an area that he knew town officials were trying to develop.

This week — as rumors that a film studio planned to move into the Exit 2 area were finally substantiated — town officials said they will work with Pacifica Ventures to make the proposal a reality.

"Needless to say, this is a very exciting opportunity for Hopkinton," council President Vincenzo Cordone said, adding the project is expected to create jobs, increase the town's tax base and shape "Hopkinton's identity and prosperity."

"From what we've seen, this is a very well-planned" project, Cordone said. "We are committed to see this project succeed."

"This is the kind of growth industry we need to proactively bring to the state of Rhode Island," added Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy, D-Hopkinton.

Pacifica Ventures has options to buy most of the approximately 60 acres to the east of Route 95,

encompassing land owned by Roy Dubs, one of the original founders of Ocean State Job Lot; George and Dorothy Reynolds of the Brook Knoll Farm; the Lindhbrook golf course at Lindhbrook Country Club; and single-family lots in the Palmer Circle area.

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